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You and the profession : Some ways CPAs are serving community interests

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For CPAs

You and the profession

Some ways CPAs are serving
community interests

AICPA

**"Our profession should, in its conduct,
have the public interest as its chief objective."**

Wallace E. Olson, AICPA president,
before the Federal Government Accountants
Association, February 8, 1973

Filling a Need . . .

All across the country, CPAs are engaged in community and civic projects, serving on town councils or village committees, on church finance committees or school boards, helping in charity fund-raising, using their special expertise in a hundred ways to contribute to their communities.

In undertaking such projects, they have identified important community needs and have committed their own time, effort, skills and leadership qualities and then have enlisted others, either individuals or organized groups, to meet these needs.

This collection of actual stories has been compiled to show some of the more unusual ways in which members of the accounting profession have recently served their communities and to indicate some of the organizations and resources that are available to those wishing to undertake community projects.

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What CPAs Have Done

Here are some of the recent successful undertakings by CPAs who, in serving their communities, have enhanced the image of the profession. Not all of these projects, as will be seen, call upon the expertise of the CPA; many call only upon his leadership—the ability to identify a need in the community and then to find a way to meet it.

He organized a city clean-up drive

When it comes to urban grime and litter, most city dwellers just complain. One CPA, however, with expertise in urban affairs, focused public attention on the problem and enlisted the aid of a number of civic organizations and volunteers for a large-scale beautification program for his city. The volunteers with rakes, brooms and shovels “swept” through 22 square miles of the city, and the department of sanitation provided 125 trucks and 375 men to cart away the litter. Even the State National Guard cooperated, providing 72 men, 50 trucks and five wreckers for use in moving heavy items off vacant lots. *Result:* A better-looking city and a CPA whose community reputation casts luster on his profession.

Helping youth in the business world

In a western city, one of the crucial problems was lack of work opportunities for youth. A CPA got together with other community leaders and formed a nonprofit organization to promote cooperation between youth and business. He and his volunteers joined with businesses in the community and secured donations of materials, services and funds for projects that would use the services of the young. *Result:* An economic problem of the community was alleviated and the CPA became recognized as one of the civic-minded leaders in his community.

Saving a town's natural resources

A CPA beginning his practice in a suburban town was appalled by the devastation being wrought by land developers. There had been numerous complaints about the severe drainage problems that indiscriminate bulldozing was causing, not to mention the destruction of shade trees and other natural landmarks. He joined other like-minded residents and formed a township “shade-tree commission.” He was then instrumental in drafting an ordinance that imposed new regulations for residential housing, requiring a contractor to plant a minimum of four trees around each house or to leave standing a minimum of four existing trees.

The contractor must submit a \$100 performance bond to the commission, which is returned after two years if the trees are still alive; otherwise, it is used for planting new trees. The CPA then initiated several ecology programs for school children and has recently been elected to the town planning board and is a member of the parks and recreation committee. *Result:* He has become recognized as a source of sound advice in many areas of community welfare.

**Helping those who
help others**

In a city on the Pacific coast, five young CPAs got together to offer their services to the city's other nonprofit organizations. They set up a basic bookkeeping system and offered advice to nonprofit service organizations or groups on such matters as federal and state tax reporting requirements, payroll tax returns and information returns, and they helped provide deserving community reorganizations with goods contributed by business concerns. *Result:* There are now two child-center playgrounds renovated with materials donated by local businesses, with community volunteers providing the labor, and other civic projects are planned.

**Bringing new
business to a
depressed area**

In a midwestern city, a CPA joined a mayor's committee seeking to attract, assist and retain businesses in that area. The professional man's expertise enabled the group to work out a program that gave information to new and prospective companies on obtaining real-estate and revenue-bond financing, on locating industrial space, and on complying with zoning and building ordinances. *Result:* New industry is revitalizing a depressed area.

**Furthering the cause
of scouting through
a natural history
collection**

As part of a program to further the interests of scouting and enlighten young people, one CPA conceived the idea for a natural history collection to be located on a Boy Scout community reservation. He enlisted the help of other CPAs, members of the community, and the services of a curator

to help him select the specimens and set up the display. *Result:* Some 20,000 boys have visited the exhibit in the course of their scouting activities.

Improving the quality of government health research

One CPA, an expert in social accounting, was drawn through a tragedy in his own family to look at the subject of cancer research. He became a specialist in the funding of this area of research and was instrumental in producing and having a videotape on this subject telecast on National Educational Television (NET). He then looked into the funding by the government in this area, made an audit of its effort, and issued an adverse opinion. His work has come to national attention and is focusing the spotlight on an extremely important area of national research. *Result:* A reassessment of our efforts in this field.

Pushing out the pusher

"The secret," says one CPA who recently was awarded his community's highest honor, "is simply to look at your town's most pressing need and see whether you can somehow help meet it." In an upstate New York town, the most pressing problem was the proliferation of drug peddling near the town's high school. A practicing CPA, with members of the town's chamber of commerce, undertook to publicize the danger. *Result:* By alerting citizens to the situation, this CPA was instrumental in bringing about support for effective control.

Helping the foreign-born to meet tax responsibilities

In a large eastern city with a major foreign-born population, a young CPA organized a group to assist the poor and foreign-born with their tax returns during the filing period. He has been instrumental in pressing the IRS to take into account the language problems that large ethnic groups have with the IRS forms, as now constituted, and to undertake translation of these forms into their native language. *Result:* The IRS is studying ways to revise these forms and assist these minorities in preparing them.

Funding an opera house

One CPA in a Mountain States town has devoted time and expertise to keep alive a cultural treasure. The town's opera house dates back to the Old West's prospecting days when, in 1877, the town's theater-loving citizens built a magnificent stone opera house, hailed as "a theater without equal from the Missouri River to Salt Lake City." This opera house had been restored and has gained national attention with its yearly festivals. But more than artistic talent has been needed to keep it alive, and this practicing CPA and others have banded together in an opera association to arrange financing for this community treasure: *Result:* A three-year funding plan which will bring in endowments from various foundations and support from local businesses to set this community asset on a firm financial basis.

Teaching accounting in South America

A CPA sent by his firm to a South American city to establish an office for his firm's international clients found a tremendous need in that country for accounting education. There were simply not enough trained accountants for the growing economy. Since the CPA spoke Spanish fluently, he volunteered to teach evenings at the nearby university. *Result:* This man's community work in a foreign country has earned for him and his profession respect and gratitude.

Collecting regional art for the community

One CPA is using his collector's talent to put together a museum of regional art for his community. It all began with his own collection of marble and bronze sculptures by an early American artist. This sculptor's work depicts his sentiments on family joy and the abolition of slavery through set pieces of political dignitaries, literary figures, slaves in distress, or plain Americans of the nineteenth century doing commonplace things. This CPA has formed a club of collectors of such regional art and intends to exhibit his and the other members' collections to their community. *Result:* A renewal of community interest and pride in its regional past.

What Has Been Done Through Your State Society

In serving your community, your state society of CPAs can be most helpful. In addition to holding regular meetings on subjects of importance to CPAs, representing the profession before the legislature, and presenting continuing-education courses, your state society initiates and supports a large number of projects through which you as a professional can enhance your stature and that of the profession. Here are examples of programs sponsored or aided by state societies.

Providing volunteer accounting services to community organizations

With help from their state societies, many CPAs have organized to offer their services on a non-fee basis to community organizations. In Connecticut, California, Virginia and a number of other states, committees have been formed to channel such services. In Virginia, for example, interest in community involvement was stimulated by sponsoring Junior Achievement "audit firms" to function under the state society's auspices. In New Jersey, the state society assisted in developing plans for a pharmacy desperately needed in the slum areas of one large city, and, in many other states, free accounting services are provided to such organizations as the United Fund and local charities.

Holding courses to educate and train small businessmen

One of the most effective community services supported by state societies has been the accounting education and training given to minority businessmen by CPAs. In Missouri, the state society provided accounting sessions for two national minority businessmen's conferences. In Colorado, business courses are presented three or four times a year with significant minority participation.

The state society has set up a coordination committee with the private sector to prevent duplication of efforts in this area. In Illinois, an eight-week course for owners of small businesses has been developed by CPAs, based on *Businessman's Information Guide*, a manual prepared by Illinois CPAs and published by the AICPA. In Michigan, business classes are held one or two nights a week in specific disciplines such as minority contract accounting, an on-going program with 70 to 100 participants. In Florida, the state institute presents an annual "small business seminar" in cooperation with federal agencies.

Providing income tax aid through neighborhood centers

In many states, CPA societies and other CPA groups have offered free tax return assistance to disadvantaged and low-income persons through storefront tax aid centers. Nonprofit groups of CPAs are operating in New York, New

Jersey, Colorado, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Kansas and California. Students at the University of Virginia established a volunteer income tax assistance program, aided by CPAs. In Ohio, a tax guide has been prepared for state legislators. Several states are preparing similar guides.

Sponsoring community involvement through an "Accountants for the Public Interest" concept

In California, a nonprofit group of CPAs, "Accountants for the Public Interest," was established to provide investigative, nonadvocative accounting advice to nonprofit organizations serving the public interest. These volunteer CPAs assist such groups as parent-teacher associations, legal aid societies and environmental groups. The idea in various forms has been taken up in cities like New York, Los Angeles, Portland, Baltimore and others throughout the country. The projects make accounting talent available on a non-fee basis to help solve some of the most tenacious urban problems.

Assisting business development through providing accounting services

In many communities CPAs provide non-fee accounting services to help develop community businesses either on a one-to-one basis or through community organizations or government agencies. In Indiana a state society committee organized to work with the Task Force on Business Opportunities, helping develop black businesses. In Pennsylvania, volunteers helped development organizations to package loan applications to raise capital for small or struggling businesses. In California, more than 150 minority businesses have been helped by CPAs cooperating with "business resource centers." In Nebraska, a simplified accounting system has been developed for minority contractors.

These are only a few of the state society programs which suggest how you can help serve your community. Information about any of them can be obtained from your state society or the Institute.

What Has Been Done Through the Institute

On the national and international level, you can seek aid or information from the American Institute of CPAs. In addition to its regular services, the Institute distributes some 40 million items of information, publications, courses, books, technical pieces and other materials each year to its more than 100,000 members and to the public. Many of these materials and programs can help you play a role in community service. Following are examples of some of the programs sponsored by the Institute.

Measuring social services and the social impact of industry

Of increasing concern has been the development of ways to measure the effectiveness of programs to meet social needs and the impact of industry on society. The Institute held a major seminar on social measurement and then established a committee to determine whether standards can be set to measure and report on the impact of industry on community welfare, consumers, employees and the environment. Transcripts from the seminar have been published in book form, and other materials are being developed on this subject.

Coordinating aid to small business

One of the Institute's major programs is the aid to small and minority businessmen. Basically, the Institute has been preparing materials and organizing and coordinating, through state societies, technical assistance on a voluntary basis for emerging businesses. More than 2,500 enterprises have received such assistance in the last three years. This work has been partially funded by the Office of Minority Business Enterprise.

Raising funds for minority education in accounting and recruiting minorities into the profession

The Institute has for some years been sponsoring the recruitment of minority people into the profession and attempting to aid accounting education of minority groups. To increase the number of accounting graduates in these groups, a separate fund, Accounting Education Fund for Disadvantaged Students, was set up, and contributions to this fund from CPAs and others have totaled more than half a million dollars. This fund has also spurred increased aid from other funds and from state legislatures to increase accounting education for minorities.

Setting up programs to aid the arts

The Institute has developed a major program to aid the arts and cultural organizations by offering financial and business management in their behalf. In a pilot program held in New York and sponsored by the Institute and the Associated Councils of the Arts, CPAs and management consultants

**Supplying accounting
and tax information
for special groups
through the press**

and some 60 executives of museums, symphony orchestras, repertory theaters and dance groups were brought together for two days of presentations and discussions. Several state societies and arts councils throughout the country have been holding or planning to hold financial management seminars based on this pilot program.

The Institute issues releases on all matters of interest to the national press on a timely basis. In addition, seminars on critical subjects are held for financial writers.

For special groups and specific needs, the Institute issues for use by the national and local press such information, in the form of articles and news stories, as financial tips of interest to home owners, available financial assistance for getting a college education, ways of accounting for disasters and casualties, how to stretch retirement dollars, and information on pensions. In addition it has been providing, during tax return filing time, TV and radio tax information spots for use through state societies by local TV and radio stations.

A Round-Up of AICPA Publications of Use in Community and Civic Affairs

Managing Public School Dollars

A booklet explaining school financing, of special use to school board members, administrators and others responsible for education in the community. 26 pages.

Campaign Treasurer's Handbook

Of particular interest to those campaigning for public office. 24 pages.

Businessman's Information Guide

Help for the small businessman and in the development of businesses within the community. 103 pages.

Going Public

Of use to growing businesses ready to consider issuing stock to the public. 24 pages.

Social Measurement

Discussion of important areas of measuring social programs, the problems encountered and the strategies developed by various business organizations. From the taped round-table discussions of leading sociologists, economists, CPAs and others. 123 pages.

In addition, there are available special audit guides of various industries, of state and local government units, personal financial statements, and of voluntary health and welfare organizations, all of which may be useful in specific community problems.



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